One piece of garbage at a time

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Body

SAINT JOHN * On a brisk Saturday morning, a little under 200 people, rubber boots and all, gathered behind Parkway Mall to participate in the Canaport LNG seventh annual Marsh Creek cleanup this past weekend.

Organizing the event was Kate Shannon of Canaport LNG - the only liquefied natural gas receiving and regasification terminal in Canada.

The group was divided into teams and dispersed throughout the area in an effort to make the community a cleaner place.

"We cover a big area and people take a little bit of ownership and make sure it's clean," Shannon said.

During the event's inaugural year, the group collected seven tonnes of garbage and in the years since they've been collecting on average three tonnes. Shannon said the figure difference has to do with the education of the damage garbage can cause and the willingness of people to step forward and help.

"It's (the garbage) gone down quite a bit because people see the impact that they're making and their willingness to come back and do more."

Before everyone went their separate ways, one of the event leaders gathered the volunteers for a pep talk, challenging them to pick up as much garbage as they could.

There's no denying the annual cleanup has been and still is a success, Shannon said. There were more registered participants on Saturday than there were in previous years.

"Because we had such a good response (in years past) and people really enjoyed doing it, we just wanted to keep going."

"It's Saturday morning and it's early. I'm always impressed and really amazed to see people come back year after year to help out their community," she said.

Shannon made the fact known that Earth is our only home and there's no sense making a mess of it.

"We all live here so we all have to take care of it. We have to leave it here for others so we're trying to do this the best way we can by putting on a cleanup like this."

The Kiwanis club and the Aktion club - Kiwanis' newest sponsored club, comprised of adults with disabilities, providing the members with an opportunity to provide service to their community - also participated in the cleanup for its fifth year.

"We try to teach environmental responsibility to the people because it's important to give back to the community. This is just another way of giving back to the community," said Lind Jarvis, secretary of the local Kiwanis club.

Watching the large group of people come together for good cause had Jarvis very excited, but seeing some of the youth from the area also step forward gave her a sense of pride.

"I think it's great. I like seeing the younger generation here because this is where we can teach them that we don't just throw stuff out, we have to try to keep it clean."

Mark Brewer, treasurer of the local Kiwanis club, lived in Ontario for 13 years before moving to Saint John. He said he remembered seeing something similar in Brampton, but never experienced this many people in one large group committed to cleaning up a community.

"It's impressive. Saint John tends to have a strong volunteer spirit and we seem to get a lot of the community out there."

Following the cleanup, participants gathered for a celebratory barbecue and, as tradition would have it, they identified this year's most unique item as an anti-theft device that was still beeping after it was pulled out of the creek.

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